

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
WESTERN DIVISION

Case No. 5:24-CV-00123-M-BM

IN RE: GOLDEN CORRAL DATA
BREACH LITIGATION

FINAL APPROVAL ORDER AND JUDGMENT

These matters come before the court on Plaintiffs' unopposed Motion for Final Approval of Class Action Settlement [DE 40] and Plaintiffs' unopposed Motion for Attorney's Fees, Reimbursement of Expenses, and Service Awards [DE 36]. The court heard these matters on May 19, 2025. Based on the record presented, and for the reasons stated at the hearing, the court GRANTS the motions and finds as follows:

On January 31, 2025, the Court entered an Order Granting Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement ("Preliminary Approval Order") (Doc. No. 35) which, among other things: (a) conditionally certified this matter as a class action, including defining the class and class claims, (b) appointed Plaintiffs as the Class Representatives and appointed Gary M. Klinger of Milberg Coleman Bryson Phillips Grossman PLLC as Class Counsel; (c) preliminarily approved the Settlement Agreement; (d) approved the form and manner of Notice to the Settlement Class; (e) set deadlines for opt-outs and objections; (f) approved and appointed the Settlement Administrator; and (g) set the date for the Final Fairness Hearing;

Pursuant to the Notice requirements set forth in the Settlement Agreement and in the Preliminary Approval Order, the Settlement Class was notified of the terms of the proposed Settlement Agreement, of the right of Settlement Class Members to opt-out, and the right of

Settlement Class Members to object to the Settlement Agreement and to be heard at a Final Fairness Hearing.

On May 19, 2025, the Court held a Final Approval Hearing to determine, inter alia: (1) whether the terms and conditions of the Settlement Agreement are fair, reasonable, and adequate for the release of the claims contemplated by the Settlement Agreement; and (2) whether judgment should be entered dismissing this action with prejudice. Prior to the Final Fairness Hearing, a declaration of compliance with the provisions of the Settlement Agreement and Preliminary Approval Order relating to notice was filed with the Court as required by the Preliminary Approval Order. Therefore, the Court is satisfied that Settlement Class Members were properly notified of their right to appear at the Final Fairness Hearing in support of or in opposition to the proposed Settlement Agreement, the award of attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses to Class Counsel, and the payment of a Service Awards to the Class Representative.

The Court is not required to conduct a trial on the merits of the case or determine with certainty the factual and legal issues in dispute when determining whether to approve a proposed class action settlement. However, the court is required under Rule 23(e) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure to make the findings and conclusions set forth herein for the limited purpose of determining whether the settlement should be approved as fair, reasonable, adequate, and in the best interests of the Settlement Class.

The court has granted to all persons who have so requested the opportunity to be heard in accordance with the Preliminary Approval Order, heard the presentation of Class Counsel and counsel for Defendant, reviewed all of the submissions presented with respect to the proposed Settlement Agreement, determined that the Settlement Agreement is fair, adequate, and reasonable, considered the application made by Settlement Class Counsel for attorneys' fees, costs,

and expenses, and the application for Service Awards to the Representative Plaintiffs, and reviewed the materials in support thereof. Being fully apprised, the court ORDERS:

1. The Court has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this action and over all claims raised therein and all Parties thereto, including the Settlement Class.

2. The Settlement involves allegations in Plaintiffs' Class Action Complaints against Defendant for failure to implement or maintain adequate data security measures and safeguards to protect Private Information, which Plaintiffs allege directly and proximately caused injuries to Plaintiffs and Settlement Class Members.

3. The Settlement does not constitute an admission of liability by Defendant, and the Court expressly does not make any finding of liability or wrongdoing by Defendant.

4. Unless otherwise indicated, words spelled in this Order and Judgment Granting Final Approval of Class Action Settlement ("Final Order and Judgment") with initial capital letters have the same meaning as set forth in the Settlement Agreement.

5. The Court, having reviewed the terms of the Settlement Agreement submitted by the Parties pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(e)(2), grants final approval of the Settlement Agreement and for purposes of the Settlement Agreement and this Final Order and Judgment only, the Court hereby finally certifies the following Settlement Class:

All individuals impacted by the Data Breach that occurred between August 11, 2023 and August 15, 2023 who were sent a notice of the Data Breach.

Specifically excluded from the Settlement Class are:

(1) the judges presiding over this Litigation, and members of their direct families; (2) the Defendant, their subsidiaries, parent companies, successors, predecessors, and any entity in which the Defendant or their parents have a controlling interest, and their current or former officers and directors; and (3) Settlement Class Members who submit a valid Request for Exclusion prior to the Opt-Out Deadline.

6. The Settlement was entered into in good faith following arm's length negotiations and is non-collusive. The Settlement is in the best interests of the Settlement Class and is therefore approved. The Court finds that the Parties faced significant risks, expenses, delays, and uncertainties, including as to the outcome, including on appeal, of continued litigation of this complex matter, which further supports the Court's finding that the Settlement Agreement is fair, reasonable, adequate, and in the best interests of the Settlement Class Members. The Court finds that the uncertainties of continued litigation in both the trial and appellate courts, as well as the expense associated with it, weigh in favor of approval of the settlement reflected in the Settlement Agreement.

7. The Settlement Agreement provides, in part, and subject to a more detailed description of the settlement terms in the Settlement Agreement, for:

- a. Claims Administration as outlined in the Settlement Agreement whereby Settlement Class Members can submit claims that will be evaluated by Settlement Administrator.
- b. Defendant to pay all costs of Claims Administration from the Settlement Fund, including the cost of the Settlement Administrator, instituting Notice, processing and administering claims, and preparing and mailing checks.
- c. Defendant to pay, subject to the approval and award of the Court, the reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses of Class Counsel and a Service Awards to the Class Representative from the Settlement Fund.

The Court readopts and incorporates herein by reference its preliminary conclusions as to the satisfaction of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a) and (b)(3) set forth in the Preliminary Approval Order and notes that because this certification of the Settlement Class is in connection

with the Settlement Agreement rather than litigation, the Court need not address any issues of manageability that may be presented by certification of the class proposed in the Settlement Agreement.

8. The terms of the Settlement Agreement are fair, adequate, and reasonable and are hereby approved, adopted, and incorporated by the Court. Notice of the terms of the Settlement, the rights of Settlement Class Members under the Settlement, the Final Fairness Hearing, Plaintiffs' application for attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses, and the Service Awards payment to the Class Representatives have been provided to Settlement Class Members as directed by this Court's Orders, and proof of Notice has been filed with the Court.

9. The Court finds that the notice program, set forth in the Settlement Agreement and effectuated pursuant to the Preliminary Approval Order, was the best notice practicable under the circumstances, was reasonably calculated to provide and did provide due and sufficient notice to the Settlement Class of the pendency of the Action, certification of the Settlement Class for settlement purposes only, the existence and terms of the Settlement Agreement, and their right to object and to appear at the final approval hearing or to exclude themselves from the Settlement Agreement, and satisfied the requirements of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the United States Constitution, and other applicable law.

10. The Court finds that Defendant has fully complied with the notice requirements of the Class Action Fairness Act of 2005, 28 U.S.C. § 1715.

11. As of the Opt-Out deadline, three potential Settlement Class Members have requested to be excluded from the Settlement. Their names are set forth in Exhibit G to the Declaration of Frank Ballard of Kroll Settlement Administration in Connection with Final Approval of Settlement. Those persons are not bound by the Settlement Agreement and this Final

Order and Judgment and shall not be entitled to any of the benefits afforded to the Settlement Class Members under the Settlement Agreement, as set forth in the Settlement Agreement.

12. No objections were filed by Settlement Class Members.

13. All Settlement Class Members who have not objected to the Settlement Agreement in the manner provided in the Settlement Agreement are deemed to have waived any objections by appeal, collateral attack, or otherwise.

14. The Court has considered all the documents filed in support of the Settlement, and has fully considered all matters raised, all exhibits and affidavits filed, all evidence received at the Final Fairness Hearing, all other papers and documents comprising the record herein, and all oral arguments presented to the Court.

15. The Parties, their respective attorneys, and the Settlement Administrator are hereby directed to consummate the Settlement in accordance with this Final Order and Judgment and the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

16. Pursuant to the Settlement Agreement, Defendant, the Settlement Administrator, and Class Counsel shall implement the Settlement in the manner and timeframe as set forth therein.

17. Within the time period set forth in the Settlement Agreement, the relief provided for in the Settlement Agreement shall be made available to the various Settlement Class Members submitting valid Claim Forms, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Settlement Agreement.

18. Pursuant to and as further described in the Settlement Agreement, Plaintiffs and the Settlement Class Members release claims as follows:

Upon Final Approval of this Settlement Agreement, Releasors release, acquit, and forever discharge Defendant and each of their present and former parents, subsidiaries, divisions, affiliates, predecessors, successors, and assigns, Board of Trustees, and the present and former directors, officers, employees, agents, insurers, shareholders, attorneys, advisors, consultants, representatives, partners, joint venturers, independent contractors, wholesalers, resellers, distributors, retailers, and

the predecessors, successors, and assigns of each of them as well as covered entities associated with the Data Incident ("Released Parties") from all liabilities, rights, claims, actions, causes of action, demands, damages, penalties, costs, attorneys' fees, losses, and remedies, whether known or unknown, existing or potential, suspected or unsuspected, liquidated or unliquidated, legal, statutory, or equitable, that result from, arise out of, are based upon, or relate to any release of Private Information from the Data Incident, and conduct that was alleged or could have been alleged in the Action, including, without limitation, any claims, actions, causes of action, demands, damages, penalties, losses, or remedies relating to, based upon, resulting from, or arising out of the disclosure of Private Information from the Data Incident, provided that nothing in this Release is intended to, does or shall be deemed to release any claims not arising out of, based upon, resulting from, or related to the Data Incident. Upon the Effective Date, Defendant and its representatives, officers, agents, directors, principals, affiliates, employees, insurers, and attorneys shall be deemed to have released, acquitted, and forever discharged the Settlement Class Representatives and Class Counsel from any and all claims or causes of action of every kind and description, including any causes of action in law, claims in equity, complaints, suits or petitions, and any allegations of wrongdoing, demands for legal, equitable or administrative relief (including, but not limited to, any claims for injunction, rescission, reformation, restitution, disgorgement, constructive trust, declaratory relief, compensatory damages, consequential damages, penalties, exemplary damages, punitive damages, attorneys' fees, costs, interest or expenses), whether known or unknown, that arise out of, are based upon, or relate to prosecution of the Litigation, the Settlement Agreement, or the Settlement claims process (provided, however, that this release and discharge shall not include claims relating to the enforcement of the terms of the Settlement or this Agreement).

Upon entry of the Final Approval Order, Releasors shall be enjoined from prosecuting any claim they have released in the preceding paragraphs in any proceeding against Defendant or based on any actions taken by any of the Released Parties that are authorized or required by this Agreement or by the Final Approval Order. Likewise, Defendant and its representatives, officers, agents, directors, principals, affiliates, employees, insurers, and attorneys shall be enjoined from prosecuting any claim they have released in the preceding paragraphs in any proceeding against Settlement Class Representatives and Class Counsel or based on any actions taken by Settlement Class Representatives and Class Counsel that are authorized or required by this Agreement or by the Final Approval Order. It is further agreed that the Settlement may be pleaded as a complete defense to any proceeding subject to this section.

19. The Court grants final approval to the appointment of Plaintiffs as Class Representatives. The Court concludes that Class Representatives have fairly and adequately represented the Settlement Class and will continue to do so.

20. Pursuant to the Settlement Agreement, and in recognition of their efforts on behalf of the Settlement Class, the Court approves a payment to the Class Representatives in the amount of \$2,500 each as Service Awards. Defendant shall make such payment in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

21. The Court grants final approval to the appointment of Gary M. Klinger of Milberg Coleman Bryson Phillips Grossman PLLC as Class Counsel. The Court concludes that Class Counsel has adequately represented the Settlement Class and will continue to do so.

22. The Court, after careful review of the fee petition filed by Class Counsel, and after applying the appropriate standards required by relevant case law, hereby grants Class Counsel's application for attorneys' fees in the amount of \$610,500. Reasonable costs and expenses of \$14,620.84 are also hereby awarded. Payment shall be made pursuant to the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

23. This Final Order and Judgment and the Settlement Agreement, and all acts, statements, documents, or proceedings relating to the Settlement Agreement are not, and shall not be construed as, used as, or deemed to be evidence of, an admission by or against Defendant of any claim, any fact alleged in the Litigation, any fault, any wrongdoing, any violation of law, or any liability of any kind on the part of Defendant or of the validity or certifiability for litigation of any claims that have been, or could have been, asserted in the lawsuit. This Final Order and Judgment, the Settlement Agreement, and all acts, statements, documents, or proceedings relating to the Settlement Agreement shall not be offered or received or be admissible in evidence in any action or proceeding, or be used in any way as an admission or concession or evidence of any liability or wrongdoing of any nature or that Plaintiffs, any Settlement Class Member, or any other person has suffered any damage; provided, however, that the Settlement Agreement and this Final

Order and Judgment may be filed in any action by Defendant, Class Counsel, or Settlement Class Members seeking to enforce the Settlement Agreement or the Final Order and Judgment (including, but not limited to, enforcing the releases contained herein). The Settlement Agreement and Final Order and Judgment shall not be construed or admissible as an admission by Defendant that Plaintiffs' claims or any similar claims are suitable for class treatment. The Settlement Agreement's terms shall be forever binding on, and shall have res judicata and preclusive effect in, all pending and future lawsuits or other proceedings as to Released Claims and other prohibitions set forth in this Final Order and Judgment that are maintained by, or on behalf of, any Settlement Class Member or any other person subject to the provisions of this Final Order and Judgment.

24. If the Effective Date, as defined in the Settlement Agreement, does not occur for any reason, this Final Order and Judgment and the Preliminary Approval Order shall be deemed vacated, and shall have no force and effect whatsoever; the Settlement Agreement shall be considered null and void; all of the Parties' obligations under the Settlement Agreement, the Preliminary Approval Order, and this Final Order and Judgment and the terms and provisions of the Settlement Agreement shall have no further force and effect with respect to the Parties and shall not be used in the Litigation or in any other proceeding for any purpose, and any judgment or order entered by the Court in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement shall be treated as vacated *nunc pro tunc*, and the Parties shall be restored to their respective positions in the Litigation, as if the Parties never entered into the Settlement Agreement (without prejudice to any of the Parties' respective positions on the issue of class certification or any other issue). In such event, the Parties will jointly request that all scheduled Litigation deadlines be reasonably extended by the Court so as to avoid prejudice to any Party or Party's counsel. Further, in such

event, Defendant will pay amounts already billed or incurred for costs of notice to the Settlement Class, and Claims Administration, and will not, at any time, seek recovery of same from any other Party to the Litigation or from counsel to any other Party to the Litigation.

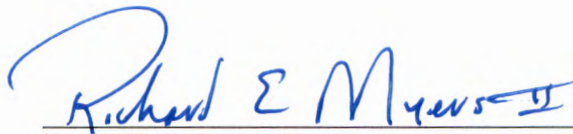
25. Pursuant to *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 382 (1994) and the parties' agreement, this Court shall retain the authority to issue any order necessary to protect its jurisdiction from any action, whether in state or federal court.

26. Without affecting the finality of this Final Order and Judgment, the Court will retain jurisdiction over the subject matter and the Parties with respect to the interpretation and implementation of the Settlement Agreement for all purposes.

27. This Order resolves all claims against all Parties in this action and is a final order.

28. The action is dismissed with prejudice. The Clerk of Court shall close the case.

SO ORDERED this 19th day of May, 2025.



RICHARD E. MYERS II
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE